



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 02/10/2021

ITEM NO: 2

ADDENDUM

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DATE: February 9, 2021  
TO: Planning Commission  
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director  
SUBJECT: Requesting Approval for Demolition of an Existing Single-family Residence, Construction of a New Single-family Residence, Removal of a Large Protected Tree, and Site Improvements Requiring a Grading Permit on Property Zoned R-1:12 Located at 62 Ellenwood Avenue. APN 510-20-068. Architecture and Site Application S-20-008. Property Owners: Lisa and Case Swenson. Applicant: Lisa Nichols, Arcanum Architecture, Inc. Project Planner: Sean Mullin.

**REMARKS:**

Exhibit 20 includes additional public comments received between 11:01 a.m., Wednesday, December 9, 2020 and 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 9, 2021.

**EXHIBITS:**

**Previously received with the December 9, 2020 Staff Report:**

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings and Considerations
3. Recommended Conditions of Approval
4. Color and Materials Board
5. Project Description and Letter of Justification
6. Consulting Architect's Report, dated May 19, 2020
7. Applicant's response to the Consulting Architect's Report, dated August 18, 2020
8. Consulting Arborist's Report, dated June 3, 2019
9. Applicant's response to the Consulting Arborist's Report, dated August 18, 2020
10. Fence Height Exception Letter of Justification, dated August 17, 2020
11. Applicant's neighbor outreach efforts, dated August 18, 2020
12. Applicant's neighbor outreach efforts, dated November 18, 2020
13. Public comments received by 11:00 a.m., Friday, December 4, 2020
14. Development Plans, received November 20, 2020

**PREPARED BY:** SEAN MULLIN, AICP  
Associate Planner

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Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

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SUBJECT: 62 Ellenwood Avenue/S-20-008

DATE: February 9, 2020

EXHIBITS (continued):

Previously received with the February 9, 2021 Staff Report:

15. Revised Recommended Conditions of Approval
16. Applicant Response Letter
17. Revised Color and Materials Board
18. Exterior light fixture
19. Revised Development Plans, received January 27, 2021

Received with this Addendum Report:

20. Public comments received between 11:01 a.m., Wednesday, December 9, 2020 and 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 9, 2021

33 Peralta Ave  
Los Gatos, CA 95030  
December 13, 2020

Sean Mullin, AICP  
Associate Planner  
Community Development Department  
Town of Los Gatos  
110 E. Main Street  
Los Gatos, CA 95030

Dear Sean,

**Regarding: Approval for Construction at 62 Ellenwood Avenue (Site Application S-20-008)**

My name is Art Monk. My wife Sharey and I have lived at 33 Peralta Ave. for 16 years. Before that time, while living in Saratoga, I was active in the Los Gatos community raising over \$1.5 million and leading the reconstruction of the Los Gatos Rowing Club on Lexington Reservoir following the 1994 arson fire that destroyed the Club's facility. Since then, approximately 5,000 high school and middle school athletes have participated in LGRC's programs. We are community people though we have never met the owners of the subject property and only wish them well in their project.

I walk past the subject property at least six times per week and see it as an element of natural beauty with the trees and open space helping to define the look and feel of our neighborhood. Though there are many issues brought forward in the written public comments (scale, mass, materials, style, ...), I wish to focus my comments solely on trees, and those that are slated to be removed (#924 & #925) if the Town accepts the present plan.

**What does it mean that certain trees are "protected?"**

We are told that the Oak trees referred to by number above are protected in the records of the Town Arborist. As a lay person, I would believe that to mean that such trees would be protected from harm or removal by developers, designers, excavators, and the property owners themselves for the benefit of the community. In some sense the visual impact of these beautiful trees is a public good that we all share, and we look to the Town to preserve and safeguard such goods.

Just because a designer has "difficulties" with a plan, we should not just strike these public goods from the registry to make it easier for them to achieve their client's goals. Great designers take such constraints and treat them as a design challenge to produce award-winning work that meets the needs of all. In software-speak, they "turn bugs into features."

**Do we have any examples of such outstanding work nearby?**

Yes, we do. Pictured at right is the Sobrato property at the corner of Bachman and Glen Ridge which stands as a welcoming monument to our neighborhood. Construction on this house was completed in 2013 and as you can see there is a large Oak tree in the center of the lot which the designers were able to elegantly incorporate into the plan rather than just cut it down. You might recall that this lot sat vacant for \*many\* years because the large Oak tree was a serious challenge to anyone wanting to develop the property - not to also mention the B.F. Bachman Redwood tree that stands at the corner of the lane that was planted circa 1884.

So, the Sobrato family, who also own and operate a construction company, were able to work sensitively with their designers to create a design for a 2,500





sq. ft. house on a 9,240 sq. ft. lot without any tree removal – and the result is easily an award-winner and a great match for the neighborhood in terms of scale, style, and materials. This is definitely a case where architects, planners, and designers worked together seeing the constraints as guideposts leading them to an elegant design rather than just appealing to have the constraints eliminated (i.e. the removal of the tree in the very center of the lot).

The same planning commission that oversaw this wonderful result is responsible for approving the plans and designs for 62 Ellenwood. One would think that the constraints and guidelines, particularly regarding protected trees, that were applied in 2013 would still be applicable today for this new application.

The Sobrato property is less than a three-minute walk from 62 Ellenwood and one drives past it to get to the 62 Ellenwood property.

### **Is there an opportunity to apply greater imagination?**

Yes, we believe so. The gorgeous grove of Oak trees pictured below stand on the 62 Ellenwood property. These wonderful public goods (at least the vision of them) are central to this part of the neighborhood and we see no reason why they should be threatened or treated differently than the Oak tree at the center of the Sobrato property. The designers involved in this project should dig in, move things around, make trade-offs, use advanced digital tools and the depth of their experience to come up with a sensitive and outstanding design. If they imagine it ... it can happen.

### **Just a word of caution**

With the trees becoming central to the discussion, we implore the Town to make certain that they are protected and that they do not suffer any harm that would render their preservation moot. If they were worth protecting before, they are certainly worth protecting now.

I am opposed to them being cut down.

Sincerely,

Art Monk

408-888-7376

amonk@ix.netcom.com



**From:** Diane Siemens <siemedian@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 5, 2021 1:58 PM  
**To:** Sean Mullin <SMullin@losgatosca.gov>  
**Cc:** kvchimenti@yahoo.com; schwinkel66@gmail.com  
**Subject:** 62 Ellenwood Ave Planning Application - 2/10.2021 Agenda

To: Sean Mullin, Los Gatos Planning Department  
From: Peter and Diane Siemens

We live at 69 Ellenwood Ave. which is across the street and uphill from the proposed structures.

The new plan does soften the appearance of the structures so that they fit better with the surrounding homes. The size and front coverage is still out of scale in the neighborhood. Additionally, the gate and truck parking area next to the garage seems unnecessary considering that there are five parking slots elsewhere. That driveway would have trucks backing up into the driveway of #67 or the pavers in front of our house. Some trucks are required to make an irritating noise when backing up. Beyond the size and the parking area, we are worried that the fire pit planned down by the creek and far from the house is a fire danger. The canyon/creek area has long been a concern because of dry vegetation along its length.

Also, this promises to be a long construction process. Would it be possible to limit exterior, noise producing work to weekend hours during the whole week due to the pandemic. Many of us are spending a great deal of time at home and will be held captive to this process and the accompanying traffic/worker parking.

Please include this letter with Planning Commission and Town Council packets on this issue. We will attend the 2/10/2021 Zoom meeting.

Peter and Diane Siemens  
69 Ellenwood Ave.

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